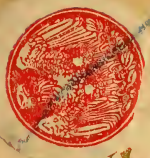

The Merry Times of Sixty Years Ago

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[Todd, Helen M.]

THE MERRY TIMES OF SIXTY YEARS AGO

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.O15M4
1915

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TO

the noble and self-sacrificing

FRIEND,

by whose suggestion, and unyielding perseverance in carrying out her suggestion, for the preservation of this little "Word-Picture" of the fun and frolic of the Young, ninety and one hundred years ago, is this Poem affectionately

DEDICATED;

remembering, lovingly,

ALL THOSE

who have, to her intimation, responded.

THE AUTHOR.

The Sheldon Press,
Burlington, Vermont, U. S. A.

PREFACE.

The "Merry Times of Sixty Years Ago" is a "Word-Picture" of the Select-School Teacher's "Exhibition", held in the Church, at the close of his Term.

The exercises consisted of short recitations by the boys, compositions read by the girls, dialogues, music, and a Benediction by the Pastor.

The "Apple-paring" and the plays following it, also "Shaking the Quilt" and the "Kitchen-dig" are no longer thought of, or known.

This "Word-Picture" was drawn nearly thirty years ago, which places the happy times of those young people in the *far away* past.

It is well at times to take a look backward and compare the pleasures and *dis*advantages of those days with the pleasures and *ad*vantages of the present time.

Doubtless the young people of that generation were as happy as the young people of to-day—knowing no other life.

H. M. T.

A. D. 1914.

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THE
MERRY TIMES OF SIXTY YEARS AGO.

By
HELEN M. TODD.

A GLANCE AT
VERMONT
IN
"YE OLDEN TIMES."

THE MERRY TIMES OF SIXTY YEARS AGO.

THE SCHOOL EXHIBITION.

My Grandpa was a pleasant jovial man
As bright in age as when his youth began,
And loved right well his thoughts to backward run
And live again those days of youth and fun.
How often we would gather 'round his chair
When we were young, and smooth his silver hair,
With—"Please, my Grandpa, tell to us a tale—"
And never, never did our Grandpa fail
Our wish to grant, and cheerfully relate
Some wondrous story, or some Hero's fate
Who rode on land or sail'd upon the sea—
A King or Sailor, or a Soldier free
Who on a battle-field rode fiery steed—
A perfect horse of the Arabian breed—
Whose speed was like an arrow swiftly hurl'd,
If strength fail'd not, could gallop 'round the world.

His mind was strong as if he still were young;
And then he had a very limber tongue
That could relate a tale in such a way
That, after list'ning, you would surely say
He might in youth have acted on the stage,
Or even now he could in Farce engage.
He had a way that on your feelings wrought,
And in his List'ner's brain excited thought.

The time of which I speak was on a night
Of waning moon, and she gave little light;
And so, expecting not a caller there,
We gathered, happy 'round our Grandpa's chair.

His long used pipe, bowl down, upon the stand
He lightly tapp'd, then laying it away,
A moment lean'd his head upon his hand
As if this thought—"Well now, what shall I say?
Which story tell?" play'd lightly in his brain—
Then bending lower, thought, and thought again,
As if a doubt were active in his mind,
Or story's thread 'twere hard for him to find.
At last a smile o'er his mild features roll'd,
And, leaning back, this story Grandpa told:—

When I was young my business call'd me 'round
The country where strange things I sometimes found.
I often heard much that would please your ear,
And sometimes saw what roused in me a fear.
Sometimes a pleasure would my leisure fill,
And sometimes grief my youthful blood would chill.

THIRTEEN

My Father said, ere I became a man,
"John, you have eyes, see everything you can;
And ears you have, but take care what you hear,
From fools and folly keep forever clear.
You have a tongue that's hid within your face,
Chain it, my Son, and keep it in its place,
For mischief comes, and sorrow fills the heart
When tongues grow loose, and from discretion part."
His wise command I strictly did obey
And it has led me through a pleasant way.

THE SCHOOL EXHIBITION.

I chanced one day to stop within a place—
A country town—where strange was every face—
Where on that day had closed the District School,
And busy Students, as was then the rule,
Prepared to read or speak or act in plays—
They called them Dialogues in early days—
And have such fun as many never know.
O, times were merry sixty years ago!

In many an Exhibition I have been,
And, children, I would like to be again;
But though I feel I still am young in heart,
My stiffened limbs could take no active part.

The Church was warm and early there I went
To hear the speaking, and on pleasure bent,

And see the boys do what I oft had done,
And, of the girls, gaze at the prettiest one.

The boys had laid, from stand to forward pew,
Long boards, but over them no carpet threw
For in those days such luxuries were rare,
And merry youths for carpets did not care;
But at each end were curtains fasten'd high
That hid the boys and girls from staring eye.
The people came, and soon that Church was cramm'd,
The seats were fill'd, and full the aisles were jamm'd,
And even at the entrance, near the door,
Too small the space for very many more.

The Teacher glanced around upon the mass,
Then call'd the girls and ranged them as in class,
A row on either side—all dress'd in white—
The fashion then—and 'twas a lovely sight!
The girls were healthier then than nowadays,
With ruddier cheeks and far more natural ways—
That is—it seems so to *my* aged eye—
But this I know, they had more modesty!
Some wore long braids, and some had curly hair,
And all were pretty,—some were very fair,
With shining eyes that rival'd Heaven's deep blue,
While others flashed in midnight's darker hue.
They sat like doves, as modest and demure,
And, as descending snowflakes, seem'd as pure.

The Teacher 'rose and with an anxious eye
As if he feared something would go awry,
"Salutatory—William White" he said;
Soon Will advanced and bowing low his head—
First o'er the waiting crowd his eye he ran
To still his trembling, then this speech began:—

"Pursuant to a custom long,
We greet you, Friends, with speech and song
On this last Academic day
In which we lay our books away.

We close them with a short 'good bye'—
Vacation weeks will quickly fly,
And then again the open page,
With minds more studious, we'll engage.

We feel we've scarcely reach'd the door
To Knowledge—long the way before—
But, listen now with lenient ear,
We promise more another year."

He left the stage; the Teacher rose and said:—
"The Rainbow—Francis Green"—up came his head—
He took his place, but, in confusion dire,
Forgot his bow—his face seemed all on fire;
He tried to speak—unsteady came his breath—
In fact, that boy was frightened half to death!
The Prompter gave him words—two, three or so,

But that poor boy—he "couldn't make it go";
And though to speak I know that hard he tried,
He turn'd away and bitterly he cried.

Next came "The Golden Bell" by Jennie Gage;
Miss Jennie rose and moved across the stage
And paused before a stand, where candles three
Join'd their dim lights, the better there to see,
Then courtesying low with easy, winning grace
Read this—while rose suffused her lovely face.

"As Sleep's soft wings around my head
Their plumage curl'd last night,
There came a form with noiseless tread
And face of dazzling light;
It press'd one hand upon my eyes
The other on my ear,
And now —What scenes before me rise!
What melody I hear!

Above the fleecy cloud on high
I see a golden bell,
It seems suspended from the sky—
By what I cannot tell—
Yet, there it hangs bathed in the light
Of Sol's or Luna's ray;
It chimes in sweetest strains at night,
It rings a hymn by day.

O, wondrous things the Angel told
Unto my list'ning ear
About that bell of shining gold
Whose music now I hear!
He said no heart was ever wrung
By care or pain or woe,
But quickly from that tuneful tongue
The sweetest chimes would flow.

And when within a faithful breast
Is breathed an earnest prayer,
Whisperings of sweet peace and rest
Float, echoing, through the air.
No tears of grief in any land
From sad eyes ever fell
But quickly reach'd an Angel's hand
And rang that golden bell."

She was the fairest one of all those girls;
Such lovely eyes, and shining, golden curls!
And when she spoke, her tones—they thrilled my heart!
Young Cupid never, *never* play'd his part
More nimbly than he play'd with me that night,
And chain'd my spirit to that girl in white.
My fate was fix'd—I knew it then and there—
Seal'd by that blue-eyed Maid with sunny hair.
I loved her—sought her— and, I won her, too;—
A perfect woman—tender, loving, true.

"My Country" next—Fred Jones, I think, his name;
A sprightly lad before us quickly came.

"My country, my Country! my pride and my glory!
No worthier theme can inspirit my lay;
The Minstrel in song, and the Poet in story
Around thee have wreath'd both the olive and bay.

Here cringeth no vassal, here frowneth no tyrant;
Here Liberty stretcheth from sea unto sea;
The poor with the rich is an equal aspirant
For honor and fame in this land of the free.

Within thee, my Country, rise steep rugged mountains
Whose summits lie under perpetual snow;
Within thee are valleys where streams from full fountains
Throughout the four seasons unceasingly flow.

Here standeth the hut of the bold mountain ranger,
Here resteth the palace of affluent ease,
Here homes lie, reserved for the penniless stranger,
Here cottages nestle 'mid ever green trees.

And many the Temples where worshipers, kneeling,
Lift upward glad voices in praise and in prayer,
And thank the good Father, with hearts full of feeling,
For a Nation so free and a Country so fair.

God bless thee, my Country! my pride, and my glory!
No worthier theme can inspirit my lay;
The Bard and the Poet, in song and in story,
Have 'round thee entwin'd the green olive and bay."

Then hands were clapt until the palms were sore,
And cow-hide boots stamp'd long upon the floor;
For they were Patriots in those early times
And never failed to cheer a Patriot's rhymes.

"The Exile's Song", from Nellie Winchel's tongue,
Fell like sweet music that dense crowd among;
And when her voice the deathless stillness broke
It seem'd to us as if an Angel spoke.

"An Exile roam'd in foreign lands,
Among Alhambra's crumbling walls;
And over India's scorching sands;
His step had rung in Briton's Halls.

He'd stood on dizzy Alpine heights,
Had watch'd the torrents misty foam;
Had gazed on Norway's gorgeous lights,
Yet still his heart was in his home.

He'd stood beside the Sea whose waves
Shrank back 'neath Aaron's smiting rod;
By Martyrs' tombs and Pilgrims' graves,
And where Man held converse with God.
He'd walk'd beside Nile's turbid stream
And on Sahara's choking sand;
Still, though awake or lost in dream,
His heart clung to his native land.

By broken arch and leaning tower
He'd sat and mused on ages gone;
On Rome's declining since the hour
Byzantium laid her corner-stone.
On Beauty's form and flashing eye
His gaze fell oft and rested long;
Yet, turning, sadly, with a sigh,
He sang to Home this plaintive song.

Where the violets nestle, and where the wild roses
Unfold their bright petals beneath the blue sky,
Where long in the valley the twilight reposes—
'Tis there I would live, and 'tis there I would die.

Switzerland's hills may be steeper and wilder,
And deeper and whiter her cataract's foam;
Italy's skies may be softer and milder,
But dearer to me is my Green-Mountain Home.

I have stood by my window and watch'd the sun setting
As slowly his curtain of brilliance unrolled,
And gazing, enraptured, Time's motion forgetting,
Have seen the bright crimson fade into the gold.

I have stood in my door as the morning sun, rising,
Dissolved the thick cloud and dispelled the dark night;
I have gazed while, the mountain in glory baptizing,
He pour'd in the valley his radiant light.

O, my Green-Mountain Home! It is there the wild roses
Unfold brightest petals beneath bluest sky;
There longest the soft, dreamy twilight reposes—
'Tis there I would live and 'tis there I would die.

For in that fair valley is resting my Mother,
My Father lies near her in Death's dreamless sleep;
We laid on the hill-side a sweet blue-eyed Brother,
And over my Sister the wild tendrils creep.

O Fate! take me back where my loved ones are sleeping!
Oh, had I the wings of an Eagle, I'd fly
And rest not till 'neath me the woodbines were creeping,
Where in youth I have play'd, and in age I would die!"

Next on the stage a youth, with careless air,
Saunter'd along as though he didn't care
What others thought, nor yet what they might say—
A fearless boy well formed to have his way—
With active brain above the common run,
And always ready for a little fun.
"Involuntary Plagiarism" was spoken—
And not a time was even silence broken.

"The Poet who in centuries flown
Lived, claim'd his verses as his own;
He search'd the mass of words and chose
This one and that—discarded those—

And wove them round the thought that came
Teeming into his fertile brain.
He knew naught of the clouds that lie
Within the heaven of those who ply
The pen to-day! The same old view
Before *us* rests! There's nothing new
Of odor, taste, touch, sound or sight
On which the Poet *now* can write.

He stood a king, on Beauty's throne,
Within the crowd—and yet alone—
And none could reach his silky hair
Except to place the laurel there.
In those far years no other man
His verses would with malice scan
And say—'I've read these lines before,
A score of years ago or more,
Before your hand had strength to hold
A quill or pen of steel or gold!
I've seen in print this very thought!
'Twas stolen—surely never bought—
For rather would the Poet part
With the red drops that warm his heart
And give the color to his cheek,
And to his tongue its power to speak!'

The stars now twinkling in the sky
Were seen by Virgil's thoughtful eye;
The sun that dyes the clouds in red

Once shed his warmth on Homer's head.
Yon lovely arch of softest blue
Hung, as to-day, before the view
Of her, who from Leucadia's steep,
Desponding, took that fatal leap.
Ideas that from *our* brains may spring
Once in *another's* spread a wing;
And whatsoever theme we try,
Others have sung in years gone by.
Now, what is left for us to say
Who fain would wield the pen to-day?
Must we our quills in mourning drape
And wind them round with folds of crape,
Then bury them deep under ground
Until the trumpet's voice shall sound?
Or, till the earth a change shall make
In present laws? or, sudden, take
A different course—another way
From that in which she moves to-day?
Because the themes have all been 'writ',
Must we our pens forever quit?
No, Brothers! Sisters! ye who joy
In scribbling, *still* your pens employ!
No one need read who will refuse,
Who take no pleasure in the muse,
Or who *still* think our brains are light—
We cannot as the *ancients* write!
Others have had their mighty say—

What harm if *I* in my small way
Should dip my pen into the ink
And jot down what I chance to think?
What if the thought that's in my head
Some other lips *have* sometime said?
For me to write is pleasure still—
A loved companion is my quill!
Though Critic's scorn for me ignite,
It lessens not my joy to write!"

But there was one poor boy who, I was told,
Loved Katie Winn, and did his love unfold,
And she to him gave willingly her heart
And vow'd her love from him should never part.
But when a *richer* came, she from him turn'd,
And, recklessly, his pure affection spurn'd.

The shock was great; for months did Harry lie
Delirious; many thought the boy would die;
But friends were kind and to the sufferer came,
But Harry, after, never was the same;
And when he came and stood before us there,
He raised his eyes and gave to Heaven this prayer:—

"O God! remove the heavy hand
That rests upon my aching head!
Before Thee, tremblingly, I stand—
My strength and courage too are fled.

TWENTY SIX

I am like one in forest wild
By untried terrors closely bound;
Oh! hear thy pleading, frighten'd child
Who in the wild no friend has found!

My tears are like the burning brook
That flows from the volcano's breast;
Give, give my soul one pitying look,
And to my heart its long'd-for rest!

I thought my faith in Thee was strong,
I thought my head had much of power,
Alas! its strength is like a song
Sung and forgotten in an hour!

Oh! I *did* hope that I could rise
Above Earth's galling, fretting sin;
My soul could penetrate the skies,
Or, opening, let Thy spirit in!

I sought for Truth and perfect Love—
Alas! I find them not in Earth;
One has its dwelling place above—
The other is of heavenly birth.

From earthly joys I turn away;
Earth's vanities I've vainly tried;
I'm longing for that blissful day
When I can cast them all aside."

I look'd around and wonder'd if within
That Church was cruel, fickle Katie Winn;
I closely search'd and Katie Winn espied;
Head bent, behind her muff she sat—and cried.

Nat Bolyn follow'd—O! a wit was he—
Full to the chin of fun as boy could be!
And when the stage his youthful feet had press'd,
With sober face the crowd he thus address'd:—

"A little child one morning lay upon a pillow white,
But three short weeks before, its eyes first open'd to the light;
A little, tiny, kicking thing, devoid of use or sense,
Commanding much of others' time without a recompense.

Its eyes stare blankly at the wall—in vain you seek a trace
Of good or bad, or anything, within its little face;
Its motions are as aimless as the look within its eye,
Its knowledge sums in these two words—to swallow and to cry.

A little kitten three weeks old can run and jump
and play,
A little child that age must flat upon a pillow
lay.
A little chicken one month old has two wings
well begun,
A little child as young as that can boast of 'nary
one.'

A lamb starts life with four good feet that need
no leather shoes,
A child has only two, and those at first he can-
not use;
A calf, when but twelve hours old, can speak its
mother-tongue,
A child may study five long years, and then it's
just begun.

Between the infant and the brute the difference
is much,
In feature, feeling, form, and thought, activity,
and such;
But 'tween the animal and man 'tis greater
still, I say,
But th' difference in the *latter* case is quite the
other way."

Again hands clapped that were with labor brown,
And cow-hide boots play'd quickly up and down.

Up in the gallery, sat, with smiling face,
Joe Smith—the only fiddler in the place—
A man well loved by ev'ry boy and girl
Whose nimble feet in merry dance could whirl.
They *fiddled* in those days—but now they *play*,
'Twas *fiddle* then—'tis *violin* to-day.
From strings well closed the modern music springs—
Joe rocked *his* bow upon the *open* strings.

When "Music" from the Master's lungs was sent,
Joe Smith a moment o'er his fiddle bent;
His right thumb pick'd the A and then the D
Next touched the G, but longer play'd with E,
For E had sunk a tone or two, or more,
And must be drawn to where it stood before.
With thumb and finger slow he turn'd the screw,
Then lightly o'er the strings the bow he drew,
And seeming satisfied, rose to his feet
And, instantly, the strings and horse-hair meet.
That sounding G like to a chime-bell rung,
And many a foot, unthinking, quickly sprung,
But soon remembering, knew it would not do,
So only toes moved, noiseless, in the shoe.

O, *that* was music! and it thrill'd me through
When Joe Smith's bow across his fiddle flew!
And when he ceased and sat down with a bow,
And wiped the perspiration from his brow,
Eyes flash'd and smiles on many features play'd,
But Joe, unheeding, down his fiddle laid.

Then came the Dialogue—where, all in vain
The Scholar tried to beat into the brain
Of good old Deacon Homespun that this world
Was round—globe-like—and on its axis whirl'd.
But Deacon Homespun thought 'twas no such thing—
If this world turn'd, all loose things it would fling
To—somewhere—*where* he didn't "exactly" know—
But said the earth was fix'd—he knew 'twas so.
The Scholar's argument in vain was spent,
The Deacon turn'd and to his oxen went.

Next—quietly, before the crowd there came
A pleasant youth—Tom Day, I think his name—
Who show'd such power and mastery of will
O'er those who listened there, to keep them still,
And then successfully their minds engage,
That one would think Tom lived upon the stage;
Or, like few others, he was born to grace
In youth the school, in age a higher place.
He walked the stage as only genius can,
And, bowing low, his subject thus began:—

"What is this 'something' that we call the
'Thought'—
This viewless, soundless, strangely restless
thing?
It seemeth often with true widsom fraught,
And from Divinity it claims its spring.

'Tis formless as the ether; yet we kneel
In helplessness before its mighty power;
'Tis changeful as an autumn sky; we feel
It moving, noiseless, with each passing hour.

Around the Universe a belt it throws
In moments less than active tongue can sound;
From Arctic iceberg to the Tropic rose
It quickly springs with one light, easy bound.

It plunges 'neath the Ocean's restless waves
And wanders o'er its rockly, dreary bed;
It looks into the coral, gem-lined caves,
And muses o'er the features of the dead.

It flashes through illimitable space
And dallies with bright Saturn's shining band;
It challenges the comet in a race,
And e'en before Heaven's portals does it stand.

It passes through the guarded pearly door
And stands beside the sparkling crystal lake;
It moves along the gold mosaic floor,
And dares a look upon the Throne to take.

The measurements of Time it casts aside.
And seeks the hours before Creation's birth,
When Chaos sail'd upon Confusion's tide
Beneath no sky, and near no pleasant earth.

What mind has probed the mysteries of Thought!
What foot has follow'd where it dares to go!
What wondrous chain has Forger ever wrought
That 'round the Thought its golden links can throw!"

But, Children, Time would fail me to recite
All that I heard on Exhibition night;
And so but one more will I mention now—
An active boy who wore an open brow,
And who stepped quickly to the front and said:—
Though first he paused and low inclined his head—

"There's a beautiful land where the homeless can rest
By his own blooming vineyard and tree;
And if labor to him is no troublesome guest,
Then his home will be happy and free.

'Tis a land of high mountains and valleys and plains,
And of lakes in extent like a sea;

But no king with his scepter, nor slave with his chains,
Dwelleth there, for that country is free.

There's a beautiful banner with thirty-eight stars
On a field, as the violet, blue;
And beneath, there are thirteen long, parallel bars,
And it waves o'er the noble and true.

May that tri-colored banner in dust never trail,
Nor its stars ever lessen their light;
For the hope it awakes in the breast shall ne'er fail
While it floats, like an angel, in sight."

Again comes "Music" from the Master's lips,
And Joe Smith's bow again in measure dips;
Now bending low 'mid thunder-tones it plies,
Now to the shifts with seeming joy it flies;
It rocks, it shakes, it teeters, and it swings,
Now does it moan, and now like bird it sings.

It sighs, it sobs, in agony it weeps,
It laughs, it shouts, and now it almost sleeps,
Till Joe Smith's bow with magic seems possess'd,
And none dare move until that bow's at rest;
Nor while the echoes in that building rove
Do fingers stir, or tongues begin to move.

Now on the stage the Preacher steps and stands,
And in clear tones, with outward reaching hands—
"Let blessings from the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit rest with ev'ry one."

Soon tongues found voice, shoes clatter'd on the floor,
Men left, and women gather'd near the door
To wait their turn when, snugly in the sleigh,
Impatient steeds soon hurl'd them swift away
'Mid jingling bells and flying balls of snow.
And *thus* we frolick'd sixty years ago.

THE APPLE-PARING.

My youth is past; full two-score years have flown
Since on my path that "Star of Beauty" shone.
Yet memory lives—tonight she wakes to tell
How quickly Love's sweet buds to blossoms swell,
With me it burst from bud to perfect bloom—
White-petal'd, shining, weighty with perfume.
Love pure, true, holy—'tis a seedling fair
Planted by God—an object of His care!
With heart, hope, trust, and faith with patience given
Its fruit soon ripens for the garner—Heaven.
'Tis like a dewdrop from the fountain-blest,
Bright'ning the leaf receiving it as guest.
From some bright star it seems a rosy ray
Lighting and warming Man's dark, chilly way.
Not mine the skill to paint the theme divine,
The brush must move in mightier hands than mine;
No pen of mine, though drawn from Seraph's wings,
Can trace an echo of the song she sings.
Now glancing backward o'er the fading years,
Love's rosy light more radiant appears;
And looking forward o'er my future way
The radiance deepens into Heaven-bright day.

That night I slept, and waked, and slept again,
But rested not, for through my troubled brain
There peer'd an eye of darkest, deepest blue,
While wings attach'd to ringlets past me flew.

One golden curl danced just before my eye
And brush'd my cheek, then far away 'twould fly
And turn, or whirl, and glide back moving slow,
Close to the ground, so very, very low
That I would reach to grasp the shining thing—
And quickly reach—but, suddenly, 'twould spring
High in the air just ere I thought to take
The pretty curl—then, grieved, I would awake.

Next eve an apple-paring—book'd to be
At Jennie's cottage; there I'd surely see
The girl whose like I ne'er before had met,
And whose sweet face I never could forget.

The evening came; I, dress'd in very best,
Elated, went to frolic with the rest.
Miss Jennie, smiling, met us at the door;
Soon in the kitchen, a huge fire before
That in the fireplace blazed, a seat I found,
And quietly took time to look around.

The room was large but seem'd to me quite low—
In olden times they built their kitchens so—
With walls unplaster'd, joist in full relief
To which were tied huge chunks of drying beef.

Upon one side, quite to the farther end,
From wooden pegs, did sausage-links depend;
And near, two poles—three feet apart—were hung
Ready to hold the apples to be strung
By youthful fingers eager for the play

Of beading fruit to while the hour away.
Close in the farther corner, at my right,
A bedstead, 'neath a coverlet of white
And home-dyed blue, in checks of different size,
And fring'd, stood waiting there for sleepy eyes.
But opposite, behind a rocking-chair,
A spinning-wheel fill'd in the corner there.
Across the beam some rolls were careless flung,
And from the spindle still a short one hung,
While round the standard loosely coil'd the band
As dropp'd, or thrown there, by a hurrying hand.

On wooden cleats—wherein no art I traced—
A musket and a blunderbus were placed;
And on a shelf beneath them, careless laid,
Two well-fill'd shot-bags—both, I judged, home-made.
A powder-horn, two wooden cider-taps,
A few old flints, and three long leather straps.
Back of them all, and nearly out of sight,
A rusty bayonet that once was bright.
A hunter's knife, an old sword in its sheath,
And some tow strings upon a nail beneath.
A dozen pegs stood out behind the door
For hats, coats, mufflers when the day was o'er,
And all were gather'd near the cheerful blaze
To read, or chat, and end the winter days.

Pans full of apples well the table load
While underneath in baskets, more are stow'd,

And near them knives of ev'ry shape and size,
Long, short, and crooked, lay before our eyes.
Some chose their knives and, reaching, drew a pan;
Others took strings, and then the fun began.
Some pared, some cut, some cored, while others strung—
With mirth and laughter that old kitchen rung—
And now a seed, aim'd at another's face,
Unerring flies, and sticks there in its place;
While smiles upon the Marksman's features play,
The target quickly brushes it away.

Some girls their apples carefully would pare,
The peel unbroken, raise it in the air
And in small circles three times wave it o'er
The head, then, watching, drop it on the floor.
'Twould fall in letter-shape, as all could see—
(Some friend's initial it would always be.)

But when the apples were all pared and strung
And on the poles, in bending circles, hung,
The floor well swept by young hands swift and strong,
Then the refreshments nice were brought along.

Mince, apple, squash, and luscious pumpkin pie,
And cheese, while near the twisted doughnuts lie,
And fruited sweetcake made from rising dough—
They called it *'lection* sixty years ago—
Then follow'd cider drank from pewter mug
Pour'd from a pitcher, or brown earthen jug.

They lived on homely food in early days
And little knew of our dyspeptic ways.
The healthy stomach and the active brain
And strong nerves shall we ever see again?

Now plates and pieces all are clear'd away,
The room made ready for a little play;
The chairs and stools against the wall we place
To have in center all we can of space.
Each girl is then by even numbers known
While boys must answer to odd ones alone.
Then in the centre stepp'd that pretty girl,
A pewter plate she swiftly 'round did whirl
And calling *seven* darted for my chair
While I, confused, still kept my sitting there.
I saw the joke but seized and hugged her well
Just as that plate stopp'd whirling 'round and fell
Then I was judged and made to climb a chair
With Jennie, and "ripe cherries" gather there.
Soon that was dropp'd and, seated in a row,
"Button, button, who has the button now?"
While all kept still and look'd so very wise
That one could see the button in their eyes.

Next came—"My Master sent me to you, Sir"—
"What for?" "To do with *one* as I do, Sir"—
Then each one says and does the self-same thing,
And up and down a score of young fists spring.
Again—"My Master sent me to you, Sir"—

"What for?" "To do with *two* as I do, Sir"—
And so on till the tedious play is o'er
By tipping chairs that pitch them on the floor.

"The Needle's eye" we threaded through and through,
And sang as loud as lungs would let us do;
And then we tried the "Copenhagen" rout,
We "spatted *in*" and then we "spatted *out*";
But in each game some judgment fell on me
For some were sharp and could my secret see.
The last play ere we left that charming spot
Was this, with clapping hands—"Bean porridge hot."
Thus, thus the time flew past; none thought of home,
(But many on that night set out for "Rome".)
The last hour came; then, cuddled in the sleigh,
The prancing horses whirl'd us swift away
'Mid jingling bells and flying balls of snow.
And thus we frolick'd sixty years ago.

THE QUILTING.

My business urged; I ought not to delay;
Yet two days longer I resolved to stay
For, on the latter day, a quilting-bee
Was plann'd, to end with dancing. There I'd see
Again my Jennie with the curly hair;
So for the dance I gladly did prepare.

With strong steel thimble and with reticule
The Ladies gather at a morning hour,
And with chalk'd string, a pasteboard and a rule
Mark out the quilt in diamond, leaf, and flower.
Around the frame they sit as close as peas
In the green pod, and try their best to please
With careful stitch and swiftly drawing thread—
Before the dance some one will shake that spread
And she who takes the final stitch will be
The very first the wedding-ring to see.

The younger ones their needles swiftly ply,
And tongues as rapidly as needles fly.
On rounded cheeks the healthful color lies,
And glances bright flash out from smiling eyes.
Each does her utmost; no one tries to shirk;
No dancing there without the finish'd work;
That room is parlor, kitchen, dancing hall,
And dance they there, or dance they not at all.

And now the Matrons quietly repair
To some lone corner—each in easy-chair—
Where with the snuff-box freely passing 'round
Their faces soon reveal the pleasure found.
Thus pass'd the day; the last stitch Jennie took;
And then they waited: that quilt "must be shook",
And shook for—well—it was "all Greek" to me—
I couldn't see how dust on it could be.

Eve brings the husband, brother, and the beau.
Without, from boots, they sweep away the snow,
Then raise the latch, when open swings the door
And muffled forms walk nimbly o'er the floor.
With wraps aside, warm greetings then begin,
And kindly words show kindly hearts within.
Now whispers one (I did not understand)
And now a maiden takes me by the hand
And leads me to my pretty Jennie Gage,
And there we stand, like twin birds in a cage,
While o'er our heads the quilt they shake and shake
Till batting flies and threads, reluctant break,
And many ravelings lie upon the floor
Before the shaking of that quilt is o'er.

Now comes Joe Smith with pleasant, smiling face,
And drawing out his fiddle from its case,
Tightens the bow, and rubs upon the hair
The rosin cube; each string he fixes there

Firmly in place, then, taking easy seat,
Waits for the call to start the eager feet.

The boys choose partners and all, waiting, stand;
Now does the horse-hair rise in Joe Smith's hand
And to the tune of "Money Musk" it springs;
Once and a half, the first, his partner swings
And, casting off, move forward six and back,
Turn three fourths round—are sure no step to lack—
Then forward crosswise on the kitchen floor
And back again, much as they did before;
Then down the middle gaily dance, or hop,
Dance back, cast off one, right and left, and stop.
When each has danced of "Money Musk" his share,
We all, well pleased, unto our seats repair;
Yet, each boy seems to much prefer to whirl
In dance next time with Some-one-else's girl.
Now comes the "Dream"—of one who dwells below—
Next—through a "Reel" we winding, whirling go;
Then—"Fisher's Hornpipe"—"Cheat"—some cheated well—
And—O, my children! *all* I cannot tell.

We danced and danced till near to midnight's noon
And thought the hour had sought us all too soon,
But as Joe's arm seem'd longing for a rest
We gather'd 'round and made to him request
That while he rested, ere the dance begun
Again, a tale he'd tell—his funniest one.

Joe Smith could talk as well as he could play,
And many an hour has whiled for us away.
Now, seeming glad the boys and girls to please—
And, unlike some, ne'er needing to be teased—
First, through his hair his nimble fingers ran,
Then, settling back, this ancient tale began:—

HIPPOKLEIDES DON'T CARE.

Fair Sikyon in happiest robe is drest,
Her streets and temples with gay flags are bright.
The flower of Hellas' youth is now her guest;
Kleisthenes a banquet gives to-night.
From thousand silver lamps a soften'd light
Falls on the handsome faces that around
Within the spacious Hall—a pleasing sight—
Are group'd in expectation. Soon the sound
Of mellow flutes throughout the Palace will resound.

The courteous King unto each noble guest
Is all attention; each bright face is scann'd;
Each action noted; he would chose the best,
The wisest, bravest of that youthful band,
And to his keeping give the lily hand
Of Agariste. She, his only one,
He long had thought, and studiously plann'd,
Should, to his kingdom, bring the choicest son
That Greece can offer, ere his sov'reign years are run.

From brilliant Athens there is come a youth
Of noble bearing, and with handsome face;
Whose eye seems index to a heart of truth,

Whose form betokens strength and willowy
grace;
And in his speech the King, well pleased,
can trace
That culture and refinement which no state
Save Attica—blest mother of a race
Of heroes—rears. Sweet Agariste's fate
To him he'll yield. For her he is a fitting mate.

The richest viands fill the bill of fare,
In silver goblets sparkle choicest wines—
(To Grecian youth such sumptuousness is rare)
And, as the guarded tongue it unconfines,
Each happy guest to mirthfulness resigns.
The witty jest and merry laugh goes round,
The mellow bass with ringing tenor chimes
Till the vast walls with merriment resound.
The King sits list'ning in astonishment profound.

At length on youthful nerves and plastic brain
The sparkling, rosy wine begins to play;
Warmed by its touch, to joy they give the rein
And spend in revelry the closing day.
Young Hippokleides, gayest of the gay,
With nimble feet, and head, as feather, light,
Calls on the flutes to play a roundelay—
His feet are in a dancing mood to-night.
Kleisthenes looks on disgusted at the sight.

He sees him spinning round in wildest glee;
Now, lightly springing, dancing on a chair;
Now mounted on a table, fearless, free,
With head invert, his feet keep time in air.
Suppressing mirth, the guests, in silence, stare.
"You've danced your wife away" the Sov'reign said:
This quick reply—"Hippokleides doesn't care"—
Came floating back as on the dancer sped,
Then, whirling swift around, he stood upon his head.

Thus the bright youth who from proud Athens came,
Through love of mirth and dance and sparkling wine,
And who, one hour ago, could surely claim
The Princess for his bride, must now resign
His claim. The King her hand will soon consign
Unto a Rival, who, with wine less free
Although less brilliant, is from noble line
A true descendent. Here the moral see:—
Successes follow those who from excesses flee.

Joe's story done, again the cake and pie
And apple's nectar sparkled many an eye,
While limber tongues, like moments, swiftly flew

Till mirth and laughter rang the Cottage through.
If happy, others, I was, sure, no less
For Jennie Gage—well—you can guess the rest.

An hour or two again Joe rock'd the bow,
Then, muffled, all prepared to homeward go.
Each boy, his girl, tuck'd snugly in the sleigh
And, lifting reins, right gayly rode away
'Mid jingling bells and flying balls of snow.
And *thus* we frolick'd sixty years ago."

Our Grandsire ceased, and taking up a light
Pass'd from the room—first bidding us "good night."
We to our chambers more reluctant move,
But soon sleep brings us rosy dreams of love
And mirth and song and Beauty's sparkling eye,
Of fairy feet in dances whirling by,
Of prancing steeds, of sleigh-bells' merry chimes,
Of moonlight nights and rides in olden times.

(A. D. 1886.)

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